



John S. Anastasi, M.D.,
Chairman

Burt Fazi, M.D.,
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July 18, 2009

David H. Wilderman
Acting Executive Director

Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council
225 Market Street
Suite 400
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Mr. Wilderman,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to the PHC4 Web site. While in general I am pleased with the overall outcome at the Altoona Hospital for the 2006-2007 year, I do wish to clarify a point for individuals and patients who are going to the web site in an effort to make a decision regarding an individual surgeon.

I believe the rating system applied to the individual surgeon could possibly lead the consumer to the assumption that the cardiac surgeon is solely responsible for the patient's outcome. There are important variables that have a direct affect upon this outcome and are not calculated into the final rating system. Such variables include: the hospital policy regarding readmissions, the economic environment of the community and the level of care that ancillary support institutions are able to provide in that community.

In addition, the complexity of the patients being cared for requires participation from a wide variety of sub-specialists who appropriately perform necessary procedures in the care of these patients. The known and accepted complications of these procedures can lead to increased hospital stay and mortality. In many cases, these procedures become necessary for co-morbidities that existed prior to the open heart surgical procedures which the surgeon has no control over.

These "variables" should be clearly explained in the report so that patients, consumers, and the media who seek out information from the web site, are clear that realistically there is no single individual responsible for a patient's ultimate outcome and that taking care of a cardiac surgical patient is a complex issue requiring a multidisciplinary approach.

Sincerely yours,


John S. Anastasi, M.D.